

But this is bigger than drugs. This is drugs—there is no question about it—but it is also the national security of the United States.

We could also urge the new Panamanian Government to conduct a referendum on maintaining a U.S. presence. No one is talking to them about that. We could urge reopening of the bidding process to be more fair and equitable, and to ensure that no hostile powers are permitted to bid. We are not doing that either.

The canal was built at a tremendous expense—\$32 billion—and at the sacrifice of thousands of American lives. What a pity, the good working relationship that has developed between Panama and the United States to be lost because of the ineptitude and indifference of people in the State Department and the Defense Department of this administration. If this administration remains blind to the threat facing Panama, it is incumbent upon this Congress to make the case to the American people, to the new government in Panama, and to the Panamanian people.

That is exactly what I intend to do on this floor every day that I can get the time and the floor to do it between now and December 31. I am going to be posting another flag each day to remind the American people that we are getting closer and closer and closer to the People's Republic of China—Communist China—controlling both ends of the Panama Canal—the country that has trampled the rights of Tibetans, that threatened to run over its peaceful protesters with tanks, that has stolen our nuclear secrets, that funneled money into our Presidential campaigns, and purchased or stolen other targeting devices to target our cities, and, frankly, threatened the country of Taiwan, and even threatened California if we step in. What do we do on the Senate floor? Not only do we let them take the canal, but we also give them most-favored-nation status.

At some point, the American people are going to have to wake up. I don't know when it is going to be. But I hope it is not too late.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business for up to 20 minutes.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, we are trying to get moving on the FAA authorization bill. Will the Senator from Wisconsin agree to shorten his remarks, if we are ready to go? We are still trying to negotiate.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I would be happy to shorten my remarks in the necessity to move forward.

Mr. GORTON. I thank the Senator for his courtesy. I have no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Washington.

(The remarks of Mr. FEINGOLD pertaining to the introduction of S. 1636 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. FEINGOLD. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GORTON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

AIR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT ACT—Continued

Mr. GORTON. Madam President, I now ask unanimous consent that the substitute amendment I presented earlier today be agreed to and be considered as original text for the purpose of further amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 1891) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 1892

(Purpose: To consolidate and revise the provisions relating to slots and slot exemptions at the 4 high-density airports)

Mr. GORTON. Madam President, I now send an amendment to the desk for myself, for Mr. ROCKEFELLER, for Mr. GRASSLEY, for Mr. HARKIN, and for Mr. ASHCROFT, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mr. GORTON], for himself, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HARKIN, and Mr. ASHCROFT, proposes an amendment numbered 1892.

Mr. GORTON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Amendments Submitted.")

Mr. GORTON. Madam President, I am going to explain this amendment in some detail, as it has been the subject of both long negotiations and much controversy internally in the Commerce Committee in the almost 7 months since the Commerce Committee bill was reported to the floor, and today.

I will say right now, for my friend and colleague from Illinois, after I have spoken on the amendment and Senator ROCKEFELLER has made any remarks on the amendment that he wishes, at the reasonable request of the Senator from Illinois, after any remarks he wishes to make, we will not

take further action on this amendment today. The Senator from Illinois may have an amendment to this amendment. He may simply debate against and speak against the passage of this amendment. He prefers to do that tomorrow. At least informally, I will undertake that it will be the first subject taken up tomorrow. I am not certain I can give him absolute assurance of that, but I believe it should be the first subject taken up tomorrow, the debate to take place on it, and the positions of the Senator from Illinois presented.

There are other Members of the body who may also wish to amend this amendment. This amendment is central to this overall debate. Once we have completed action on this amendment, I suspect most of the other amendments to the bill will require much less time and will be much less controversial.

In any event, the background to the high density rule that is the central subject of this amendment is this: In 1968, that is to say, 31 years ago, the Federal Aviation Administration established a regulation to address serious congestion and delay problems at five of the nation's airports. That regulation, known as the high density rule and implemented in 1969, governed the allocation of capacity at Chicago O'Hare, Washington National, and JFK, LaGuardia, and Newark airports in the New York City area. Newark was later exempted from the rule, so it now applies only to four airports.

The high density rule allocates capacity at the four airports by imposing limits on the number of operations (takeoffs or landings) during certain periods of the day. The authority to conduct a single operation during those periods is commonly referred to as a "slot."

The Gorton/Rockefeller amendment consolidates all of the negotiated agreements to lift the high density rule, the slot rule, at Chicago O'Hare, LaGuardia, and JFK, and to ease the high density rule and the perimeter rule restrictions at Reagan National.

With respect to Chicago O'Hare, the amendment would eliminate the high density rule at O'Hare, effective April 1, 2003.

Regional jets and turboprops would be exempt from slot requirements effective January 1, 2000, for service to airports with fewer than 2 million annual enplanements. There are two additional conditions that would have to be met before carriers could take advantage of this interim regional jet/turboprop exemption. First, there could be no more than one carrier already providing nonstop service to that airport from O'Hare. Second, the exemption would only be available for new service in the market, such as when a carrier is adding a frequency to the applicable market, or upgrading the aircraft that provides its existing service in the market from a turboprop to a regional jet.

Regional jets would be defined as aircraft having between 30 and 50 seats.